



Syrian Democratic Times

The Voice of Democratic Syria
News, analysis, and opinion on democratic Syria, from Washington DC.

Women, the Peacemakers, the Leaders

By Sinam Mohamad

Women are often left in desperate positions following war and conflict. Their lives may be shattered. Their homes may be ruined or uprooted. They may have been violently brutalized or subjected to sexual violence or slavery. Their fathers, husbands, and sons may have been killed. At the same time, women are left to pick up the pieces and carry their communities forward and bring forth the next generation. War and conflict disproportionately impact women.

For this reason, women are often the peacemakers — not the makers — of war. So the women of Northeast Syria have been tireless participants, working toward democracy. They see their participation in the struggle for democracy as a key to their liberation.

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SDC at the Table

By Bassam Ishak

As I write this, major actors of the Syrian Civil War, both internal and external, are struggling to come to an agreement on who will be members of a committee to

create a new constitution for the nation. This constitution would potentially end a brutal war which has lasted years and taken countless lives. As this very important event unfolds there is a conspicuous lack of representation for one of the most important players in the region.

The Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) represents a coalition of multi-religious and ethnically-diverse communities, administering approximately one-third of the Syrian landmass. The SDC is affiliated with neither the regime nor the rebels. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the military wing of the SDC, provided the bulk of fighters in the struggle against ISIS, and fought with great success due to their determination and support from American allies.

Yet despite the many accolades that would position the SDC as a serious partner at the table for any negotiations on the future of Syria, they have been excluded from all discussions — including the constitutional committee to be hosted in Geneva.

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SDC Participates in US State Department Ministerial on International Religious Freedom

By Lacy MacAuley

This week two senior diplomats with the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) spoke in a panel discussion that was part of the 2019 Ministerial on International Religious Freedom hosted by the US State Department. The model of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) and the Syrian crisis was the subject of the panel, “Will Religious Freedom Survive in Northeast Syria?” Sinam Mohamad and Bassam Ishak, the two co-chiefs of the US Mission of the SDC, spoke at the event, which was organized by the Family Research Council and Law and Liberty International.

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Policy Snapshot

Latest US-Syria policy impacting northeast Syria

There's fresh talk of the Turkish threat to North and East Syria, as [Turkey moves more troops and equipment](#) to the Syria border in an apparent move to intimidate US troops stationed in Syria. This once again poses a grave threat to the people of the North and East Syria. US military personnel are allied with the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) and the Syrian Democratic

Forces (SDF) as part of ongoing efforts to root out ISIS. Turkey and the United States are increasingly at odds over the US military's alliance with the SDF and over the drift of Turkey toward Russia, as exemplified by their purchase of Russian S-400 missiles, which threatens the NATO Alliance.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo spoke at the 2019 Ministerial on International Religious Freedom, sharing the stage with US Vice President Mike Pence and Religious Freedom Ambassador Sam Brownback. "America's commitment to religious freedom will never waver," stated Pompeo from the podium. The two co-chiefs of the US Mission of the Syrian Democratic Council, Sinam Mohamad and Bassam Ishak, spoke on a panel discussion titled "Will Religious Freedom Survive in Northeast Syria?" as part of the Ministerial. For more information, please see our article on the panel discussion.

A provision of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) in US Congress would authorize funding for the detainment, processing, and repatriation efforts for ISIS detainees currently being held by the SDF. The NDAA is the bill approved each year to authorize funding for the US military. This funding controls US foreign policy in relation to the US Department of Defense (DOD). The House must pass its own version of the NDAA, then reconcile that version with the Senate version. The House Armed Services Committee approved its version of the bill on June 12, 2019, and the House is expected to debate it and vote on it this in the near term.

US President Donald Trump stated [he is not looking at sanctions](#) on Turkey "right now," though US Congressional leaders have recently made public statements critical of Turkey's S-400 purchase. Trump's administration recently confirmed that it is, however, suspending Turkey's participation in the F-35 program in response to the S-400 purchase.

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AFRIN UPDATE

The Syrian city of Afrin, a historically Kurdish city in Northwest Syria, has been occupied by the Turkish armed forces since early 2018.

The Documentation Committee of AANES keeps a detailed ongoing record of

verifiable abuses. In the past month, Turkish armed forces or Turkish-backed militias have committed the following human rights abuses in the Afrin region:

- **Kidnappings and Killings:** The body of Mr. Sharaf al-Din Sidu of the city of Jandriassa was found dead and burned among the orchards on June 23. He was kidnapped by Turkish-backed mercenaries on May 19 in the city of Azzaz. The mercenaries also kidnapped Mr. Rashid Hamid Khalil, who was killed because his family did not pay ransom. Mr. Khalil's young special-needs son, Mohammed Rashid, was also kidnapped, and his fate remains unknown.
- **Torture:** Mr. Hussein Ismail, 75, was brutally tortured by Turkish-backed mercenaries, who tied ropes around his feet and lowered him into a water well. He had been accused on trivial false charges.
- **Arson, Fires:** Turkish-backed mercenaries burned 1,500 olive trees, which were civilian property, between the villages of Maskah and Jaqli Jom in the Jandriassa region. The fires also spread to nearby forest. Turkish-backed mercenaries also set fire to the mountains near the village of Badino. The Turkish-backed "Hamzat" mercenaries set fire to the agricultural land located in the villages of Barad and Burj Alqas in Shirawa District.
- **Theft of Ancient Artifacts:** Turkish-backed mercenaries dug near the village of Deir Balut in search of gold and artifacts that they can sell in the underground market, disrupting a valuable part of the archeological record in the cradle of civilization.

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